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"SOVIET MILITARY GOVERNMENT"

by



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SOVIET MILITARY GOVERNMENT

It is a pleasure to be with you here at the 12th Annual Conference of the Military Government Association. I am no expert on Military Government, and I do not intend to speak to you as a political scientist. Neither do I propose to talk exclusively or precisely about Soviet military government, but rather about some elements of the Soviet occupation in Europe.

Like many other Americans, I was in Germany at the end of the war and saw our Military Government at work. Its purpose emerged clearly to people like myself as well as to those being governed in Germany, Austria, and elsewhere. General Clay, General Clark, and other leaders made United States doctrine plain. Our brand of military government was no instrument of conquest but an interim means of meeting the needs created by a suspension of sovereignty. The approach of the United States and its Western allies to the problem of military government was essentially humanitarian. The aim was to allow national traits, traditions, and cultures to survive during the interregnum. In contrast, the aim of Soviet military government was -- and is -- very different. The Soviets purposely and consciously use their administration to destroy all elements of national life that do not contribute to the supremacy of Communism and, more particularly, of the USSR.

Reports of the Central Intelligence Agency, received over the post-war years, illuminate again and again what it means to live under such a government. The facts speak for themselves. I propose to mention some and to talk briefly about certain facets of Soviet military government at work. It is not a recital which will surprise you, but it is healthy for us to remember this recent past as we stand watching the Soviets try to swallow West Berlin and its 2,250,000 inhabitants.

U. S. government abroad reflects the freedom of U. S. government at home. In the same way, Soviet government abroad is a mirror held up to Moscow, reflecting conformism and oppression. The function of Soviet military government is to extend Soviet conquest. To Soviet occupiers, military government is not a suspension of sovereignty but a chance to take over through armed power and stooges.

Wherever Soviet troops marched, from the Baltic States in 1940 to the satellite countries in 1945 - 1947, they brought their own well-recognized brand of tyranny. Wherever and whenever the people spoke out -- as they did through Jan Masaryk in 1948 and through Imre Nagy in 1956 -- the Soviet answer was written in blood. But hopes and ideals persist, strangely impervious to the gun and the knout. And as we examine, this morning, how the Soviets and their dummy governments have ruled in four lands -- Austria, East Germany, Poland, and Hungary -- let us keep this in mind: If we Americans stand firm in patience and resolution, the self-determination of peoples may some day come to life in Eastern Europe.

In Austria the Soviet plan was defeated by the people, with a helping hand from the Western Allies. Let's take a look at the Soviet occupation there. It was unique in two ways. First, it ended. Secondly, it failed to make of that country a satellite state. There is every reason to think that the Communizing of Austria was the original Soviet intent at the Moscow Conference in 1943. There the USSR asserted Austrian co-responsibility for the war and proposed a tripartite occupation. When the war ended, the Soviets were in sole possession of Vienna for four months. They improved the shining hour by busily installing Communists in leading posts. And yet their plan failed, and they had to settle for the negative policy of attempting to ensure Austrian neutrality. Some examples of their failure can be found in the way they ran the press and the police.

After the war the Western powers began looking toward the eventual restoration of Austrian sovereignty. In October 1945 the Soviets joined the other members of the Allied Commission in guaranteeing the freedom of the public press. Seven years later U. S. High Commissioner Walter J. Donnelly said, "In recent months we have seen a darkness descend over the Soviet Zone as the lights of a free press have been snuffed out one by one. Since the beginning of the year 103 newspapers have been unilaterally banned. . . . 111 book titles have been permanently prohibited. . . . 30,823 copies of newspapers and magazines have been unilaterally confiscated from the international mails by the Soviet censor." The permanently banned magazines ranged from the Free Trade Union News of American labor to the German-language edition of The Reader's Digest, and among the prohibited books was President Eisenhower's Crusade in Europe -- because the Soviets claimed that they could see a swastika on the dust-cover. It was plain for all Austrians, and all the world, to see that the self-styled liberators from the Fascist yoke were perpetuating certain ugly Nazi customs, including the pastime of book burning.

Maybe the Soviets forgot that the Austrians invented red tape. They did, you know. In the days of Emperor Franz-Josef's Austro-Hungarian empire red tape was used to bind official documents. Ever since then the Austrians had shown an increasing skill in using it to tie up other things as well. The Austrian book-sellers and news vendors were unperturbed by Soviet censorship; they soon found that there was nothing like a good ban to stimulate under-the-counter sales. And when the Soviets ordered the Austrian police to pick up prohibited publications, the orders had a way of getting lost. If the ban was to be continued, the police picked up the first proscribed issue and forgot about the rest.

In fact, the Austrian police were a headache to the Soviets throughout the occupation. Before they lost exclusive control of Vienna, 16 of the 21 district police chiefs were Communists. The Austrian Government did a quiet, effective job. Through promotions, routine transfers, and the like they made quite a few changes. By 1947 the Soviets were convinced that the Austrian police were not a dependable instrument for a Soviet military government intent upon conquest through subversion. So they charged that the police were really a secret army created to work against them. In May 1947 the Austrian Chancellor asked for arms for the police. The Soviet response was a horrified "Nyet", and the police got wooden truncheons. Then the Austrian Minister of the Interior told the police to reject "Allied" orders that conflicted with Austrian law, with police regulations, or with the rights of other Allied powers. The Soviets declared him out of order. In a neat end-run around the Soviet veto, the Minister gravely replied that his decree was legally valid under the Control Commission unless it were vetoed by all four powers. The Soviets, having lost the legal battle, had to countermand the order baldly. The Austrian press reported the illegal action, the Soviets ordered more newspapers seized, and the police lost the orders again.

The uneasy Soviet military government was plainly baffled by people who resisted with guile instead of guns. Moscow's solution was typical. In June of 1948 the Soviets kidnapped a Chief Police Inspector, Anton Marek. In 1950 they suspended all three police chiefs in the three principal cities of their zone. They dissolved all police and gendarmerie schools in the zone, and they made a large number of secret arrests.

To be sure that police from their own zone or from Western Austria could not interfere with the shake-down, they prohibited the arrest of any uniformed member

of the Soviet forces by any Austrian for any reason. But Soviet military uniforms were not too expensive on the black-market. Soon Austrian Schiebers were garbed in the immunity of Soviet military attire and having a wonderful time.

Before the Soviet occupation of Austria ended in 1955, the Soviets had gone through a tough obstacle course. Naturally, they hadn't learned anything about how to run a military government for free men. This subject just isn't in the Communist curriculum. But Austria had provided them with a postgraduate course in suppression. Some changes were made in the textbook for East Germany. For example, the free elections held throughout the Austrian Republic in 1948 dealt the Communists a defeat from which they never recovered. So Rule No. 1 in the Soviet military government handbook for Germany became, "No free elections". Rule No. 2 is, "Make the stooges do the dirty work." Until 1949, Rule No. 2 was not used. For the first four years Soviet military government rule directly, without the camouflage of the Pankow regime. The East Germans were not happy; but the density of their population, the terrain, and an excellent communications network made resistance look hopeless.

And yet the people did resist, as we all know. At first the resistance was confined to the highly developed art of running away. Between the end of the war and the end of 1954 more than two million refugees fled from East Germany, and the stream continues. These people can't have a free election, but they are voting anyway . . . with their feet. Yet the exodus has in no way modified the Soviet intent to forge in East Germany a model satellite. All the features of Soviet tyranny at home have been exported to the Soviet Zone: people's police and people's courts, a lackey press and a chained economy.

By June of 1953 the workers of East Berlin were fed up. Fifty thousand left their jobs in a mass demonstration. Other East German cities joined in what became one of the most discriminating riots in history. Factories were not destroyed or even damaged. All essential services were continued. When the people forced their way into the jails, they released only political prisoners, not criminals. When weapons were seized, they were locked up or destroyed. The rioters burned only Communist propaganda and wrecked only the files and equipment of Communist organizations.

Soviet military government declared martial law on 17 June and ordered the East German "People's Police" to fire upon the people. There was a heartfelt Russian sigh of relief when the streets were silent again. For a while longer, at any rate, the spectre that haunts Khrushchev and Company, the spectre of a spreading democratic revolt, had gone away.

To forestall the ghost's return, the Soviets ordered their East German puppets to scurry among the people, confess their guilt, solicit complaints, and promise reforms. Some of the stooges lost their jobs. For example, Max Fechner, the Minister of Justice, was soon booted out of his post. He not only knew that the East German constitution guarantees the workers the right to strike, but on 17 June he was unwise enough to say so in public.

The story of his successor, Hilde Benjamin, is in a sense the story of the whole mock government of East Germany --- the regime that the Soviets at Geneva have been trying to cloak in respectability. Her career illustrates clearly how Soviet military government has used the East German courts as a tool for its purposes. Hilde, today the Minister of Justice, was thoroughly trained in the Soviet Union. Before she returned to East Germany to join the new dummy regime in 1949, her

future was assured. She had learned well, from the teachings of such experts as Andrey Vishinsky, what Soviet law is: a Communist sacrificial rite performed periodically to remind the members of the tribe not to break the taboos.

Red Hilde quickly showed that she had learned more than law in the Soviet Union. When she came back home, the president of the Supreme Court was a man named Schumann. She was appointed Vice-President. She quickly set out to make a change in the batting order. One evening she explained her tactics to a few friends. "I know every step Schumann takes," she remarked. "I installed the husband of my housekeeper, Sophie, as his chauffeur." President Schumann soon resigned.

Today, as Minister of Justice, Hilde dominates what is left of East German jurisprudence. But she does not seem happy. She has been known to storm from her chambers and scream at a confused clerk in the room above her that his chair squeaks. She polishes off a very large glass of cognac at a gulp. At least one bodyguard protects her at all times -- three when she's home. The Minister of Justice is nervous.

The plan for dominance, which collapsed in Austria, was more successful in East Germany. First, keep the troops in place. Next, run the country through Soviet advisors until all the actors in the puppet government know their lines by heart. Allow no elections except one-party plebiscites, as in Bulgaria, or rigged performances, as in Poland. Make sure that obedient Communists control the press, the army, the police, the courts, the economy -- all the pivots of power..

This stereotype was followed faithfully in Poland. In fact, Poland was the original test model of a satellite state. The German-Russian Friendship Pact of 1939 made everything simple. The Soviets merely attached their share of the torn

land to two Soviet republics and went to work.

They started with the political opposition. The Soviet secret police worked closely with the Gestapo in hunting down the non-Communist underground. Some patriots, loyal to the legal government in London, managed to survive. So the sixteen key figures were invited by the Soviet military government to attend a little conference in March 1945. Three months later all sixteen were on trial in Moscow, charged with sabotage. The non-Communist parties were handled by absorption into dummy organizations bearing the old labels but headed by obedient stooges. Those who resisted were arrested.

Taking over the police was made easier by the Soviet choice of the first Minister of Public Security. Stanislaw Radkiewicz, a Communist since 1924, had spent a decade in the USSR. He came back to Poland as an officer of the Soviet political intelligence service. He picked his own men and kept them busy. They were used not only to beat up the opposition but also to falsify the ballot returns in Poland's first postwar election.

Finally, there was the army. Nearly 17,000 Polish officers had been forced into surrender by the Hitler-Stalin pact. About 8,000 more disappeared in the Soviet Union during the war -- more than half of them massacred at Katyn in 1943. About the only fighting force left, the Warsaw Home Army, was destroyed in 1944, when the Soviets tricked 40,000 men into rising against the Germans and then stood by while they were slaughtered. The courts and the press were also broken and subverted into loyal servants of the Soviet military government. By 1956 the process was complete. Even so, it was necessary to keep three Soviet divisions inside Poland and overwhelming forces around her frontiers.

But the Poles do not like Soviets in general and Soviet military government in particular. In Poznan there was a riot. Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, and Molotov all rushed to Poland as experts in the repression of freedom. Soviet military formations made threatening moves. But Khrushchev and Company could not keep Rokossovsky at the head of the Polish Armed Forces or in the Polish Politburo. In fact, they couldn't even keep him in Poland. And they couldn't keep Cardinal Wyszynski and his six bishops in jail -- not in a country that is 5% Communist but 90% Catholic. They couldn't even keep the Poles down on the old collective farm. The Poznan riots forced a relaxation of controls, and the peasants poured out of the collectives like stampeding livestock. Before the Communists could stop the rush, more than three-quarters of the 10,000 collectives had disintegrated.

But seventeen years of Soviet government had taught the Poles some caution. They did not demand that the occupation end. The torch they lit at Poznan still smouldered, but the fire broke out in Budapest. The Poles were not proud of their caution; when the Hungarians arose, the Polish people said, "The Czechs are acting like swine, the Poles like Czechs, and the Hungarians like Poles."

In that autumn of 1956 it was not only the Poles who admired the magnificent courage of the Hungarian people. All of us know the story of the Hungarian Revolt. But I think it merits a brief mention, for two reasons. It shows plainly what happens when the pretense of government is stripped from the face of tyranny. And secondly, the spirit of that rebellion is not dead. It lives in Hungary, in liberated Austria, in threatened Berlin, in the USSR itself.

After nine years of Soviet military government, some ten million Hungarians had had enough of watching their oil cars rolling East, of working harder and harder for less and less, of secret arrests -- of the whole Soviet occupation.

The police and the army joined the revolt of workers, farmers, students, housewives, and children. It dawned on the Soviets that this time they might have to do their own dirty work. While Mr. Nagy asked them to get their troops out of his country, more and more poured in. Members of the Hungarian government explained at Soviet Army Headquarters that something had gone wrong. The members of the government did not come back, and the Soviet forces kept on pouring in. Mr. Nagy asked the United Nations to recognize the neutrality of Hungary. The Soviet troops kept pouring in.

Finally there were 200,000 of them, with 2,500 tanks and armored cars. They moved into Budapest and killed between 20,000 and 30,000 people. By the fifth of November they held Budapest. Soviet military government, in control of Radio Budapest, assured the people that the Soviet soldiers were the unselfish friends of the Hungarian people and that they were sharing their food with Hungarian children. The people didn't listen much, because they were trying to bury their dead.

Nearly three years have passed since the people of Hungary showed all the world what Soviet military government really is: a vast unconcern for the welfare of the governed, a bulldozing of national culture and tradition. The Hungarians saw to it that the ghost of democratic revolution still walks in the Kremlin halls.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have seen something of how Soviet military government, so-called, has functioned in Austria, East Germany, Poland, and Hungary. Today the people of West Berlin are wondering whether it is now their turn to enjoy the blessings of Soviet rule. Like the Hungarians, the people of Berlin are brave and tough. They will not submit meekly. They are telling a story these days that shows how well they understand what it means to live under a Soviet

occupation. It is a story that might be told in any place today where people are waiting, where they long for freedom. In a way, it is a story of running rather than fighting -- but sometimes people run in order to fight later.

It's the story of an East German hypnotist who earned part of his money by performing in theaters but most of it by serving the East German Ministry of Propaganda. One night, he looked around the audience as usual and picked out a meek-looking worker for his subject.

"You!" he commanded. "Come on up here. That's right. Sit down over there. Now, what's your name?"

"Stupnagel."

"Good, Herr Stupnagel. Now watch closely." The hypnotist went into his routine. Stupnagel's eyes drooped shut.

"You are in the middle of the Sahara Desert", said the hypnotist. "It's 140°. You are burning up. You have no water."

Poor Stupnagel unbuttoned his collar and mopped his brow. He panted. His tongue was out a foot.

The hypnotist snapped him out of it. The audience applauded.

"Now look me in the eye," commanded the hypnotist, and once again poor Stupnagel was gone. This time the hypnotist placed him in the middle of the Arctic, where Stupnagel shivered and froze.

The hypnotist snapped him out of it. The audience applauded again.

Then the hypnotist stepped to the front of the stage. "Ladies and gentlemen," he announced, "now I have come to the most difficult part of my act. I request your cooperation. Please remain silent."

In the silence he quickly put the little man under for the third time.

"Now, Herr Stupnagel, the worst thing of all has happened to you. You are not in the Sahara. You are not in the Arctic. You are in West Berlin. Stupidly you have left the protection of the People's Democratic Republic. The capitalistic West has squeezed you like an orange and thrown you out on the street. You have nowhere to sleep tonight. You have no job; there is not even the chance of a job. You have no money. You are hungry, and you have nothing to eat.

Herr Stupnagel, I tell you -- "

At this moment Stupnagel, eyes still closed, said, "You snap me out of this one, and I'll break your neck!"

Thank you.